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Tony Winning Vocalist Performs at the Performing Arts Center

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- New York Times columnist Frank Rich has compared Audra McDonald to a young Barbra Streisand. USA Today critic David Patrick Stearns has likened her to a young Judy Garland. On Friday, September 12, 2003, Cal Poly Arts proudly presents the three-time Tony Award-winning vocalist in an intimate evening at the Christopher Cohan Center.

Audra McDonald and her Trio will perform at 8 p.m. in the final Cal Poly Arts Center Stage Summer series concert. Born into a musical family, McDonald grew up in Fresno, California. She received her classical vocal training at The Juilliard School, graduating in 1993.

By the time she was 28, McDonald had made Broadway history, winning Tony Awards for "Carousel," "Master Class," and "Ragtime." She earned her fourth Tony nomination in six years for "Marie Christine," a musical re-telling of the Medea myth, created for her by Michael John LaChiusa.

Since then, McDonald has distinguished herself as a concert performer, recording artist, and dramatic actress, adding an Emmy nomination to her expanding list of critical and popular acclaim.

McDonald starred opposite Hugh Jackman last year in a sold-out concert performance of "Carousel" at Carnegie Hall. Writing in the New York Times, critic Ben Brantley comments, ".with the incomparable Audra McDonald playing Julie Jordan to Mr. Jackman's Billy Bigelow, 'If I Loved You'.never sounded more affecting."

The release of 1998's "Way Back To Paradise" and the best-selling "How Glory Goes" in 2000 launched McDonald's solo recording career. With "Happy Songs," her third solo album which she promotes on tour, the artist celebrates the songs of Harold Arlen, Duke Ellington, and George and Ira Gershwin.

McDonald's other recordings include a live concert recording of "Dreamgirls" (featuring Lillias White and Heather Headley); the original cast recording of "Marie Christine"; "Sweeney Todd: Live at the Philharmonic"; Leonard Bernstein's "Wonderful Town" and the original soundtrack of Tim Robbins' film, "Cradle Will Rock."

CBS' Peabody Award-winning "Having Our Say: The Delaney Sisters' First 100 Years" introduced McDonald to television audiences as a dramatic actress. She went on to co-star with Victor Garber and Kathy Bates in the critically lauded ABC/Disney production of "Annie." For Showtime,

McDonald appeared with James Garner in an adaptation of Jim Lehrer's "The Last Debate." She has also guest-starred on NBC's "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit" and "Homicide." A familiar face on PBS, McDonald was recently seen in the upcoming "A Richard Rodgers Celebration" with Keith Lockhart and The Boston Pops.

Other PBS productions include the July 4th broadcast "A Capitol Fourth," "My Favorite Broadway: The Leading Ladies"; "Leonard Bernstein's New York"; and "Some Enchanted Evening - A Salute to Oscar Hammerstein."

Audra McDonald has been profiled by "60 Minutes" and "The Today Show" and was a frequent guest on "The Rosie O'Donnell Show."

Tickets for the final Center Stage performance are \$38 & \$44 and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Center Ticket Office between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call (805) 756-2787; to order by fax: (805) 756-6088.

Center Stage Program Partners: Clifford Chapman and Gene Shidler; Harry and Nancy Batrum; KCBX 90.1 FM

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